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GERNERD EXHIBIT

OF

INDIAN RELICS

AT THE

CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION,

WILLIAMSPORT, PA.,

JULY 2, 3 AND 4, 1895.

Collection of Native North American Indian Books, Historical Books, Atlases, plus other important authors and family heirloom books.
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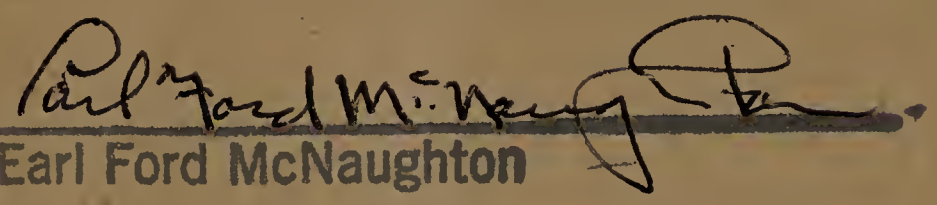

Earl Ford McNaughton

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WILLIAMSPORT, PA.:
GAZETTE AND BULLETIN PRINTING HOUSE.
1896.

Explanatory Note.

The display of Indian antiquities at the Centennial of Lycoming County, Pa., held at Williamsport in July, 1895, was unusually full and interesting. Many thousands of specimens, embracing everything once used by the aborigines, were exhibited in the immense hall built for the occasion, and they were not only greatly admired by antiquarians, but by the visitors generally. The following pages, taken from the official report of the Historical Committee, relate specially to the fine exhibit of Mr. J. M. M. Gernerd, of Muncy, Pa., and give some idea of its extent and variety. Mr. Gernerd, who has spent about forty-five years in the accumulation of relics belonging to a people now almost extinct, has one of the largest, finest and most varied collections in Northern Pennsylvania; and as his specimens are nearly all mounted and displayed, his museum is well worth a visit by those who take an interest in the rapidly vanishing race.

The Gernerd Collection.

[From Report of the Historical Committee.]

A space of twenty-three feet was occupied by more than 1,000 typical specimens from the well-known collection of Indian relics belonging to Mr. J. M. M. Gernerd, of Muncy. The various objects exhibited were nearly all found along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. They were arranged in thirty-two separate classes, and formed a peculiarly instructive and attractive exhibit of the various articles of stone and baked clay that were used by the aborigines in this part of North America. They represented nearly all the imperishable articles that were used by them in war, hunting, fishing, social games and domestic life before the white man came to possess the new world, and they gave visitors some idea of the state of their civilization. The many more perishable articles made of wood, bone, cane, horn, shell, grass, leather, feathers, etc., and which would also be required to show to what Indian want and ingenuity had advanced, were, of course, all wanting. Chiefly objects of stone and clay are now left to testify of the taste, skill and requirements of the generations of Indians who possessed this valley in prehistoric times. There were only four specimens of copper implements in the exhibit, but these—and the few possessed by other collectors—are enough to prove that native copper was also to some extent in use.

The arrow-heads, spear-heads and lance-heads, the most numerous objects of Indian handiwork, and which also constituted the larger part of this educational ex-

hibit, were neatly arranged on white paper cards, and were selected to represent a variety of patterns, the contrast of size and material, and skill of workmanship, that no doubt surprised and must certainly have delighted all visitors. The grooved stone axe, which, with the exception of the arrow-points and polished celts (deer skinners) and possibly hammer stones, is in this locality the most characteristic and best known of Indian relics, was represented by a number of the finest specimens from the owner's collection, and they showed a marked contrast in point of size and apparent utility. Many a visitor who knew how to handle the sharp-bladed iron axe doubtless wondered of what possible use such stone implements could be for working in wood. A series of pestles, varying in length from less than five to nearly twenty-three inches, with well worn ends, were interesting representations of the corn-crushers, and triturating stones, for which the Indians appeared to have a great deal of use. Maize, in fact, is known to have been a regular article of food with them.

A number of small and beautifully fashioned stone hatchets, with holes drilled in them for handles, were marked "Ceremonial Weapons," and were evidently designed for the purpose that the name indicates. See Fig. 1. Antiquarians say that they were carried by the Indians merely as objects of ornament, or as badges of distinction, and they are therefore named "Ceremonial Weapons." Their lightness and the softness of the material of which most of them are made is against the idea of their having been of any more practical use. Their beautiful finish and elegance of form indicates that much time was spent in making them, and that they were as highly valued by their original owners as by the antiquarians who now gather them up.

A question that these implements suggest to almost every thoughtful observer is, how did their fabricators drill the holes in them without the use of metal? Mr. Gernerd's specimens show that at least two different methods were employed, as the holes in some are throughout their entire length strictly uniform in diameter, and smooth, while in others of equal length of bore they exhibit annular striae, and are more or less tapering. In many broken and unfinished specimens in his collection he has also shown us that a central core exists, and that in other examples the bottom of the incomplete hole is entirely concave, or cup-shaped. There are certain drill marks that also seem to indicate more than one mode of boring.

To some visitors the most interesting part of this exhibit seemed to be the fine array of tobacco pipes. These were made of soapstone, clay-stone and baked clay. A unique and delicate specimen was the soapstone "Moccasin" pipe, of which Fig. 2 is a full size representation.

The singular double-face baked clay pipe shown in profile and full size, by Fig. 3, and the moccasin pipe, were found many years ago by Mr. Gernerd on the Indian town site between the location of the "ancient fortification" and the mouth of Muncy Creek. The Rev. Stephen B. Peet, in his American Antiquarian for May, 1886, gives three different illustrations of this two-faced pipe in a paper on "Human Faces in Aboriginal Art," and says: "Two human faces are moulded into the pipe; one possibly intended to represent the male, the other the female. The faces are grotesque and semi-comic, the eye being especially the object which was caricatured." The largest of the pipes in this exhibit was a beautiful and highly ornamented baked

clay specimen that was found at Watsontown after the great June flood of 1889.

Fig. 4 represents a curious art delineation of a combination of the head and jaws of some reptile (perhaps an alligator) and the head and face of a human being, as will be seen if the cut is held in different positions. This pipe was found near Jersey Shore, and the material is soapstone. All the pipes were interesting, and many pages would be required to give a full history and description of them. They were not merely the means of enjoying the narcotic effects of tobacco smoke, but they were used as symbols of friendship, and of peace and war. They were invested with great sanctity, and by their agency the Great Spirit was asked for favors, or propitiation was made to allay his anger. One of the most valued and finely wrought in the Gernerd exhibit, and one on which the maker evidently spent many patient hours in its ornamentation, is the baked clay pipe shown full size by Fig. 5. It was taken some years ago from the great sepulchral mound near Hall's Station. Of this pipe and the now almost obliterated structure in which it was found, a full and interesting account is given in the third volume of Gernerd's Now and Then.

Space will not permit notice of all the classes of implements of this admired exhibit. They would have furnished material for a volume. They were representative specimens from a collection that it has taken forty-five years to accumulate. There were other groups of articles marked as celts, gouges, picks, hoes, drills, perforators, flakers, knives, sinkers, plummets, gorgets, bunts, disk-scrapers, polishing-stones, paint-stones, discoidal-stones, hammer stones and some objects were not named, probably because their use was not known. An assortment of rusty and formidable looking iron

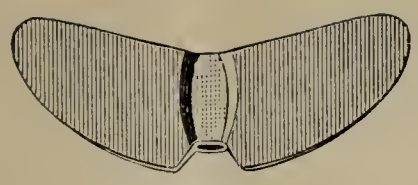

Fig. 1.

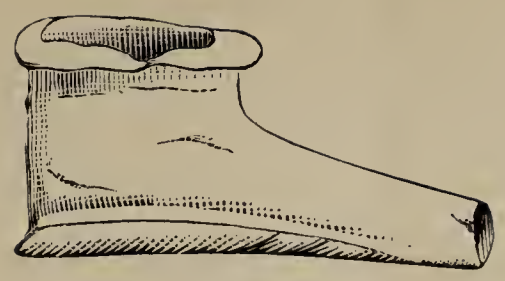

Fig. 2.

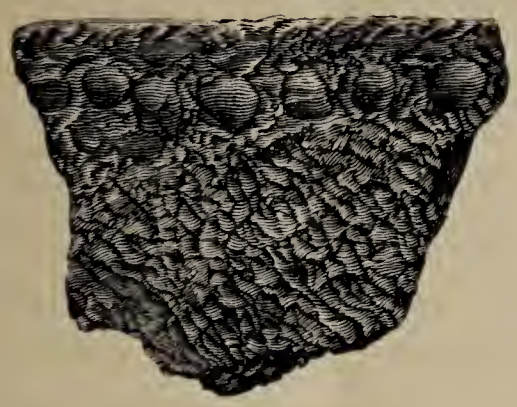

Fig. 9.

Fig 10.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 8.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

tomahawks, of various patterns and of a later historical era—Fig. 6 represents one—two we noted were labeled "From the battle-field of the Muncy Hills, 1763"—recalled to mind the distressing scenes when the revengeful savages came back to the West Branch Valley to plunder, tomahawk and scalp the almost unprotected settlers, when so many of the able-bodied men were away with the army under Washington. Could these weapons of war speak, they would doubtless tell us of dark and bloody deeds.

There were also fragments of nearly one hundred single specimens of pottery, to which we must yet give a passing notice. They are of special interest, because they especially show that while the primitive artists—who in this line of art were the women—were conspicuously imitative and but little inventive in one respect, they were nevertheless rather original and clever in another sense. The forms of the decorations are but few and simple, being nothing more than straight, parallel and zigzag lines, notches, incisions, dots, and now and then small perforations near the rim. Mr. Gernerd says, however, that he has never found pieces of two vessels that were embellished exactly alike, which fact shows that the decorators displayed some degree of taste and originality in their work. We have borrowed four cuts from Now and Then—Figs. 7 to 10—which give a good general idea of the style and latitude of ornamentation, indicated by the many fragments collected.

While these vessels of the aboriginal fictile art were rather fragile—one is very rarely found entire in this section of the country—it is fortunate that so many fragments have come down to show what embryonal conceptions of beauty in design the untutored Indian women had, and how the glorious light of civilization

had commenced to dawn upon them. The pottery art has long been recognized as having a peculiar historic value as a registrar of human progress. How and when did it originate among these humble children of the forest? And how many visitors realized the fact that the many fine porcelain wares that graced the centennial exhibit, were the lineal descendants from just such pottery made by our ancestors when they were unlettered savages in their "stone ages?" These fragments were not showy, but they were the oldest fictile specimens on exhibition, and had a value that perhaps many visitors failed to appreciate.